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New public safety levy set for November

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A fifth public safety levy - in as many years - will come before Josephine County voters on the Nov. 8 ballot. This time, the proposal comes from the newly formed Josephine County Safety Levy Committee (JCSLC), a non-partisan group of business owners, community leaders, local groups and individuals.

"This is similar to the last levy, but a little simpler and cleaner," said JCSLC media spokesman Josh Balloch. "It would raise property taxes \$1.42 per assessed thousands of dollars of value. Mainly, people should know that this money is wholly dedicated to law enforcement. Even if more funding comes in down the line, the levy money would still go to law enforcement services."

If passed, the four-year levy would generate about \$10 million annually and would fund JoCo's Sheriff Office patrols, jail and detective operations, Juvenile Justice Services and district attorney prosecution services, according to Balloch.

While county voters have rejected - often narrowly - four previous public safety levies designed to fill the gaps created after the federal government all but phased out timber subsidies, Balloch said a presidential election means voter turnout could approach 80 percent and he hopes the higher numbers will make a critical difference. Recent failed levies were presented during primary elections where only about half of the county's voters weighed in.

To critics that keep saying: "What part of 'no' don't these levy advocates understand?" Balloch responded, "Things are getting worse as time goes on, and if people really look at how crimes are going unpunished and uninvestigated they can see that criminals are becoming more brazen and emboldened. They're committing worse crimes and this situation is costing everyone more money than maybe many realize. When we do catch criminals we need jail space to keep them locked up and the ability to see them processed through the court system."

"Because the Illinois Valley is rural and more geographically isolated, it makes it more of a haven for criminals to hide out in," he added. "We know there's been an increasing influx of criminals in the county and places like the I.V. and Wolf Creek are where a lot of them are going. At the end of the day, we need to make sure criminals are not taking over our communities, and that our most vulnerable citizens, youth and elders, are protected."

Balloch, a vice president with AllCare Health, is specifically concerned for JoCo's children, some of whom are forced to "live with some of the most horrendous situations. When there's meth-addicted parents or if bad crimes happen and laws are not enforced, these kids are coping with the fallout for decades. And with no juvenile justice services, they're all the more vulnerable."

Colene Martin, CEO of the Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce, but volunteering as a private citizen in her role as a co-petitioner for the levy said, "We spend a lot of our dollars and resources for advertising to get tourists here. We are a tourist destination and we have to have them feel safe too." And co-petitioner and Merlin businessman James Dittmer said he's concerned about a potential scenario where additional cuts in federal aid could leave JoCo in an even bigger lurch, with essentially "no functioning criminal justice system" by next summer.

SEE LEVY ON A-5

'Mark Brockman Day'



(Photo by Birdy, Illinois Valley News)

Local bikers give a final send-off to the late Mark Brockman. Brockman, a Vietnam veteran and Navy Cross and Purple Heart recipient, died last month. Friends and family celebrated Brockman's life Sunday, July 17 at Sportsman Tavern, dubbing the event, "Mark Brockman Day."

Public safety event conceived in response to community concerns

By Dan Klapheke
IVN Staff Writer

The Illinois Valley Ford Institute will host a candlelight walk Thursday, July 21 from 6:30-10 p.m. in Jubilee Park. The event will feature a concert in the park with Kelly Thibodeaux and Etouffee, candles, s'mores, drinks from Dutch Bros. and community conversation.

Jean Ann Miles, one of the planners of the walk, a part of the Ford Institute cohort, said the event was inspired by a concern in the Valley for public safety.

"We interviewed a lot of people in the Valley, and trying to find out concerns that they had about the Valley," Miles said. "And without a doubt, the No. 1 issue was public safety."

In February and March of this year, the Ford Institute's then-cohort of 25 each interviewed 20-30 community members, and the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) collected surveys and conducted focus groups. The seven focus groups included middle and high schoolers, senior citizens and arts groups, Miles said, as well as a specific group to cover the 25-40-year-old-age range. Three online surveys saw

200-300 participants.

Miles said feedback overwhelmingly pointed to public safety as the Valley's top priority, with other concerns being natural resources, business development, downtown beautification and youth development.

The cohort came up with I.V. by Candlelight, and Miles said the goal of the event is for the Valley to realize its strength in numbers.

"A sense of unity, a sense of community, a sense of togetherness, a sense that we're all in this together," Miles said of what message the cohort hopes to send with the event. "That we are a community. That we don't have to be frightened or that we're stuck in our homes."

I.V. by Candlelight hopes to piggyback off Thursdays' I.V. Chamber of Commerce's Concerts in the Park series, which will be going on simultaneously. All proceeds from the concert's usual 50-50 raffle will go to the local CJ Patrol neighborhood watch group. The Ford Institute has recruited local public safety organizations to participate and set up information tables, such as Josephine County Sheriff's Department, Illinois Valley Fire District, Community Emergency Response Team, CJ Patrol,

Safehouse Alliance and more.

After the concert, the Ford Institute cohort will pass out candles and organize a walk around town, and a campfire will be going after for s'mores and to foster conversation. Miles said she hopes the event inspires others to volunteer in the community and get more involved.

"There's so many wonderful people in this valley who care and have so much potential," Miles said.

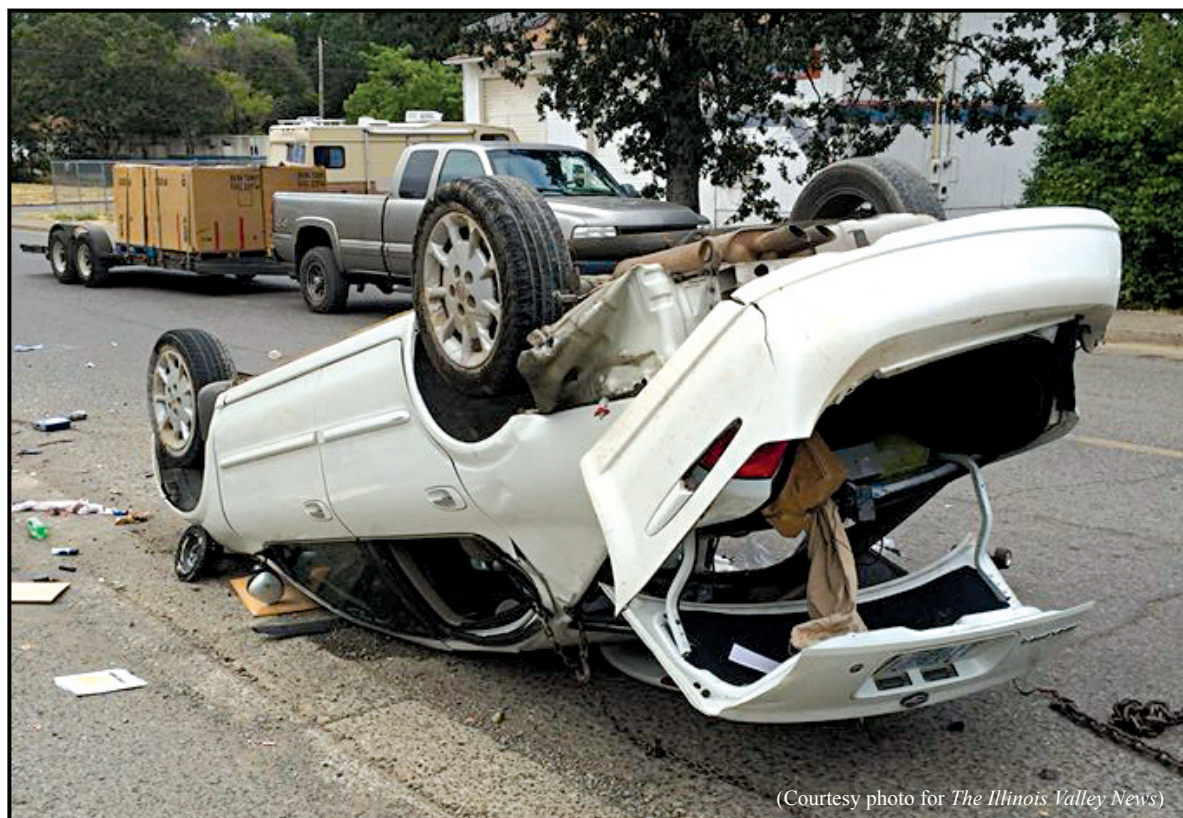
The Ford Institute is a community-building leadership development program that focuses on rural Oregon and Northern California. The institute works with and accepts all ages and backgrounds, and Miles said the local cohort includes high schoolers, retirees and local business owners, artists and former teachers. However, the group's numbers have recently dipped to 20.

The cohort is hoping to see 100-150 participants for I.V. by Candlelight, Miles said, as well as a boost from Concerts in the Park. But ideally, Miles said they would hope for several hundred.

"We have a lot more going for us than we think," Miles said of the Illinois Valley. "This is an awesome community, and we can do a lot more together than we can separate."

Vehicle intentionally overturned

A vehicle was overturned early Tuesday morning in the back parking lot behind the Red Garter. According to eye-witnesses, a large black Dodge 4x4 truck flipped the vehicle and fled the scene around 8 a.m. Jimmy Evans of CJ Patrol said the owner of the vehicle refused to call law enforcement.



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Kayaker's body found in Rogue River

By Dan Klapheke
IVN Staff Writer

A 57-year-old man was found dead Sunday, July 17 after drowning in the Rogue River.

According to the sheriff's report, the sheriff's office was advised of the incident at 4:30 p.m. The man, identified as Mark Templeton of Los Altos, California, was participating in a guided multiday trip when he apparently flipped his single-person inflatable kayak at Wildcat Riffle. Templeton

was wearing a life jacket when he fell in. He wasn't seen again after.

River guides found Templeton's body pinned underwater and were unable to remove it. Sheriff Dave Daniel, Deputy Cory Krauss and search and rescue personnel spent Tuesday, July 18 leading an effort to retrieve the body, but were unsuccessful.

The sheriff's office advises boaters in the area to use caution and float "river right," as rescue personnel will be in and around the water.